

From the desk of.....

Caregiver Emotional Toll

Previously I have written about how caregivers can take care of themselves while caring for a loved one. This month I would like to explore the emotional impact this role takes on most caregivers and some resources to help during this challenging time.

Watching a loved one decline due to failing health is difficult in so many ways. A caregiver may experience their loved one go from being a supportive partner or parent to a demanding patient. Roles and tasks are often shifted from the person who is ill to the caregiver; tasks such as dealing with the finances or household chores. In addition, the caregiver may need to provide hands-on help with dressing, bathing, toileting and other activities of daily living. As time goes on, the caregiver may begin to feel overwhelmed. Caregivers can experience a range of emotions from anxiety to despair. Some experience feeling out of control or moody; others find it difficult to concentrate; still others may increase the amount they drink, smoke or eat. These signs of stress are indicators that the caregiver may need help.

Many caregivers keep their emotions and needs to themselves – feeling that this is a private matter. It is important to understand that even the most capable person may experience strain in providing care for a loved one. Before these feelings exact a toll on the caregiver, it is important to consider talking with someone for support: family, friends and professionals can provide this help. Your own health, physical and emotional, may be at stake.

Here are some resources for caregivers to consider:

- Speak with your primary care physician
- Talk with a social worker at the Newton Senior Center by calling Kathy Laufer at 617-796-1663 or Meghan Kennedy at 617-796-1672
- Ask for respite or home care through Springwell, (the Aging Services Access Point) - 617-926-4100
- Speak with a clergy person or other community professional
- Go online to Family Caregiver Alliance: www.caregiver.org

“Caregivers make all the difference and most do so silently and unacknowledged.” (Nancy Olsen Bailey, nurse, Brigham & Women’s Hospital, Boston) If you are a caregiver, remember you don’t need to remain silent; support and resources **are** available to you.

News Tidbits

- Seniors and others currently receiving federal social security benefits by paper check must switch to direct deposit by March 1, 2013
- Most Americans are health conscious but research shows that senior citizens make healthiest choices – keep making those heart-smart choices
- Seniors are taking advantage of new free wellness checkup available to Medicare recipients; so far few are receiving free colonoscopy, mammogram and other tests

